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ABSTRACT

Arguing that the provision of child care services is consistent with the role of the community college, this paper provides an overview of the current demand for and delivery of child care services and briefly discusses ways in which community colleges can assist in the development and provision of consumer-oriented, high-quality child care. First, statistics are cited to underscore the growing need for child care among the poor, single-parent families, teenage mothers, and working women; the trend toward employer-provided child care; and the lack of training requirements for child care providers. The next sections consider the advantages and disadvantages of the following forms of child care: (1) childcare in one's own home; (2) family daycare; (3) group home care; (4) daycare centers; (5) proprietary centers; (6) franchise/commercial centers; (7) industry-sponsored centers; (8) cooperatives; and (9) public/government-run centers. After briefly reviewing trends in child care in other countries, the paper explains the concept of consumer-oriented, quality child care, which ensures that children are safe and well-nourished, that they have adequate space and learning materials, and that staff are trained in child development and teaching. Finally, the community college's roles as advocate/change agent, liaison, technical expert, and provider of services are discussed. Recommendations for colleges planning to offer child care are provided. (AJL)

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THE BOTTOM LINE:

Quality/Consumer-Oriented Child Care

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THE BOTTOM LINE: CONSUMER ORIENTED CHILD CARE

"The provision of childcare services is consistent with the community college role and mission. It is the unique purpose of the community colleges to provide a means of access to higher education for those who would otherwise be denied the opportunity. The community college offers a second chance to those whose previous educational performance acts as a barrier to traditional selective institutions. It provides the only chance for many others who, for reasons such as a job and family responsibility, low-income, or vocational interest, would not otherwise avail themselves of higher education. Students who are parents, particularly those who are low-income and have young children, can not attend college without child care.

- Report of Child Care Services at Washington Community Colleges, Washington State Board for Community Colllege Education, Olympia WA, p.2

ABSTRACT

The Community College's biggest consumer is the student, followed by business and industry and then the Community-at-large. Community college were built on the premise of being sensitive to students needs, financially accessible to all residents, responsible to the local community and comprehensive in its scope of offering. As a result, educational institutions are beginning to recognize that they must cater to both the personal and academic side of the customer (student). In doing so, Community Colleges must be prepared to address these needs.

On the personal level, one of the most pressing issues which today's students are faced with is the dilemma of finding "quality" childcare. The overriding factor is the lack of sufficent childcare services. Second, most childcare services programs are designed to benefit the providers vs. the consumer. In simplistic terms, they are not "consumer-oriented". They are generally costly, not centrally located and/or does not suit the direct needs of the consumer (i.e. the need for infant care, night-time care, care for the handicapped/sick child, care for school-aged children during summer and school holidays, etc...)

The question then becomes, "How can Community Colleges play an instrumental role in assisting their consumer in obtaining "quality" child care service. There are several possible alternatives. Let's examine the facts, general trends, and explore the options.

The Facts and General Trends

"The more obvious reasons for the current emphasis on day care include the inflationary economy, which has markedly increased the number of families needing income from more than one job; the fact that grandmothers, have gone to work outside the home and are no longer available to take care of grandchildren as they did in the past; and the greater mobility of the population, which separates extended family members and thus eliminates one traditional source of help for young parents.

The trend toward marriage before completion of education is a factor some young mothers seek daycare in order to complete their education; others support the family while the father completes his.

Another factor, is a change in governmental posture toward public support of dependent children: daycare plus training programs have in recent years been seen as eventually lowering the drain on the welfare budget."

- Sally Provence, Audrey Naylor and June Patterson, The Challenge of Daycare, Connecticut: Yale University Press, (1977), 2.

- Lois Galloway, Director of the CARE Project at Palomar College (CA), identified childcare as the greatest need of women seeking to break the cycle of poverty. One in six of all 4 and 5 years old today lives in a family where neither parent has a job.[1] In New Jersey, 65,000 adults who collect welfare have children under age 6.[2]

- Approximately fifty percent (50%) of the children today can expect to live in a single parent home, some time before their 18th birthday. Most single parents will have to work. For some the struggle to balance work and child-raising becomes overwhelming and they are forced back on welfare.[3]

- A survey was conducted by a committee formed by Governor Thomas Kean to examine some of the barries that kept people from not being able to escape the welfare syndrome. One of the most common findings amongst the respondents were the need for childcare.

- In a national study conducted by Educational Testing Services, nearly a quarter (23%) of all female dropouts left school because of pregnancy or personal/family formation reasons.[4] Clearly, this population could benefit from a School-Aged Parenting Infant Development program.

- More than 50% of women are in the work forces, and that percentage will undoubtedly increase.[5] Mothers of children under three are the fastest growing segment of the work force.[6] With the increased percentage of women in the work force, the issues surrounding daycare and early childhood education are coming to the fore.[7]

- In half of the working wives their spouse earn less than $20,000 a year; one-quarter of the working wives are married to men who are paid less than $10,000. It is obvious, that these women need to work to help meet their family's needs.

- Countless of studies have shown that employees worry about their childcare arrangements. As a result, industry pays a daily price for parental distraction and absenteeism.[8] Ultimately, industry may pay a larger price when these young children enter into the work force and have not had the proper guidance and care during their early (impressionable) years.

- This phenomenon has had a tremendous affect upon the nation's six million employers. As a result, some of them are providing childcare assistance as a part of their benefit packages. In a recent Fortune magazine coverstory it described the efforts of 3,000 corporations who tackled the childcare crisis.

- In California, a group of corporations and governmental agencies formed a consortium to provide better childcare services to their constitutuents. Monies for this project was generated from foundations. There is a potential for similiar cooperation across the nation, and it should be initated now by state and local education leaders; with the proper focus, planning and coordinated action, we can have all the resources we need to provide high-quality programs for our young children.[9]

- Childcare is a fact of modern life; it's a societal problem. For the benefit of our nation, childcare must be everybody's business.[10] We must tackle this problem so that employees can work and students can study without fear of their children's safety or welfare. Also, we must confront the desperate need for training so that child care provider have the skills to care effectively and safely for our children.[11]

- Forty-two states do not require any child development training for directors of centers.[12] The lack of funds for inservice training and low wages act as barriers to increasing the number of well-trained childcare professionals.[13]

As childcare arrangements become a necessary evil, parents must make the decision as to what's best for them and their children. This decision is generally based on the balancing of three (3) factors: (1) cost, (2) convenience, and (3) goals for their children/quality of the service being rendered.

Cost for childcare vary depending on the type of service, the type of facility and the age of the child. In many parts of the country, care for infant cost $75 - $150 per week, care for a preschool child cost $45-$95 per week, and care after school for six to twelve year olds cost about $25 per week.[14]

Low-income or fixed income parents usually receive support from the government or pay on a sliding scale basis. Working parents can expect to spend 10 percent of their income on childcare; yet 10% of a $13,000 annual income would not cover the cost of the least expensive preschool care.[15] Then, what are the options for parents.

There are several forms of childcare arrangements: (1) childcare in your own home, (2) family daycare, (3) group home care, (4) daycare centers/Head start programs, (5) school-age parenting infant development, (6) preschool nursery, (7) co-op preschool, (8) community care services/latchkey programs, and (9) child protection services or respite care.

Child Care In Your Own Home

Many parents prefer childcare in their own homes. It is only natural that in-home care offers many advantages compared to other more formal kinds of daycare. The hours are flexible, there is no need for the child or parent to travel, the child remains in a familiar, secure place and the mother is able to some extent, to monitor the behavior of a caregiver who becomes increasingly better known to her.[16]

This form of childcare can be relatively economical particularly, if there is more than one child involved; or if it's a relative or friend. When a relative is involved this generally proves to be the most stable form of childcare arrangement. Last but not least, if other services like cooking, shopping or laundry are included in the package deal.

Some of the disadvantages of childcare services in the home are (1) the caregiver is usually untrained and unlicensed (if the individual is trained, it becomes the most expensive kind of childcare), (2) it may be difficult to find an in-home caregiver (if it's not a relative) due to the fact that no systematic referral system exist, (3) turn-over rates may be high, and (4) there may be little or no educational or group activities with peers.

Family Daycare Homes

Family daycare is the oldest and most popular form of childcare outside the child's own home.[17] As much as eighty (80%) percent of the children who receive childcare services are in family daycare homes. There are good reasons for this trend: it is clear, provides many advantages to all who are involved - the child, the parent, and the provider.[18] It is small; the state laws typically limits the number of children cared in a family daycare home to five or six. Since it is small, individual attention can be given to the needs of each child.

Secondly, it affords the child the opportunity to develop a caring, trusting relationship with the caregiver and its multi-aged group peers. Additionally, daycare homes tend to be flexible in their operating hours. If the parent's work schedule changes the hours of childcare can change more easily than they might in an institutional setting.[19] They are usually nearby and children can walk there; they are in a familiar neighborhood where people are likely to share the parents' values and circumstances.[20]

Some of the disadvantages of a family daycare home are as follows: (1) of the variety of childcare arrangements, they are the least accountable to parents for their actions, (2) it is not open for public inspection, and after the mother drops off her child, though she may instruct the caregiver, she has no knowledge of what really happens,[21] (3) the vast majority of daycare home providers are not trained, not part of a support network, and not licensed,[22] and (4) they may or may not offer any organized educational activities.

There are two (2) types of family daycare arrangements: (1) independent, and (2) those who are registered as part of a family daycare system or network. Most family daycare homes operate on an independent basis. They obtain their license and manage their own day-to-day affairs. A registered family daycare provider is one that is a part of a network which operates under the auspices of a sponsoring organization or central administration. These organizations provide support, training, and monitoring to registered members. Registered providers are generally eligible to participate in the Child Care Food Program and other state subsidies for childcare. Additionally, these providers can receive liability insurance much easier than their counterparts.

Group Home Care

The group home care is the care of up to twelve (12) children in the providers home. Due to the number of children being served, additional adult supervision may be warranted. Most states have strict rules on child-to-adult ratios.

The group home arrangement is likely not to be as economical as the family daycare home. It would have the advantage over a daycare center in relationship to size, but would also carry some of the same disadvantages of the family daycare home.

Daycare Centers

Daycare centers are facilities (outside of the home) which provide childcare services on a full or part-day basis. This care is provided for children of different ages at various stages of development. Most daycare centers cater to children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. A daycare center is composed of six or more children. Most centers care for at least fifteen (15) children at one time; some may have as many as three hundred (300) children.

Compared to other daycare arrangement, centers have certain advantages: (1) for the most part, they are relatively stable, keep predictable hours, and are publicly accountable and easily monitored by parents, (2) they usually have some staff with training in child development, (3) are likely to offer children educational opportunities, and (4) the child is offered the chance to play with other children in a child-oriented child-sized, safe environment that is rich in materials and equipment.[23]

Just like other childcare arrangements, the programs in daycare centers range from inferior to superb. Some of the disadvantages to daycare centers are: (1) not centrally located near the child's home, (2) working hours are generally fixed, (3) will not provide services for a sick child, (4) may be hazardous to the child's health (i.e. epidemics of infectious diseases), (5) can be expensive, (6) services are less available to all parents due to eligibility criteria, and (7) long waiting lists.

There are a variety types of daycare programs. They may be classified according to their purpose such as: (1) to enhance the development of and provide education for young children, (2) to provide childcare for working parents and/or (3) to provide education for parents.[24] Daycare programs may also be classified according to their sponsorship: (1) those privately sponsored for profit, and (2) those who are non-profit.

Proprietary Centers

Propriety centers are for profit; they are generally small and are often located in converted stores or businesses. The staff normally consist of an owner and one or two assistants who may or may not be trained. Their mode of operation is similiar to a "Ma" and "Pa" family-run business. They generally provide business to anyone who can afford to pay the fees.

Franchise/Commerical Centers

These centers are also private and for profit. A model is adopted, then replicated/franchized. All the centers have unformity as it relates to their programs and facilities. Usually, the facility's physical appearance receives top billing over the quality of the staff. On the average, these centers enroll seventy to one hundred children in classes of about twenty.[25] They are well-equipped, in new buildings with nutritional food and some educational activities.[26] Examples of such centers are Kinder-Care, Mary Moppet and Children's World.

Industry - Sponsored Centers

A few corporations, hospitals, universities and trade unions are offering daycare services as a fringe benefit to its employees. To date, only about 150 corporations, 400 hospitals and 30 government agencies operate their own centers.[27]

These centers are large, located on/or near the company; staff are paid well and are professionally trained. They are more likely to offer a gamut of services including health care. Both the employer and employee benefit from this endeavor.

The employer receives the following benefits: (1) an employer who provides a childcare service is more attractive to potential applicants than competing employers who do not provide such a service,[28] (2) they can attract highly qualified applicants or returning workers into the labor force, (3) improve labor/management relations and morale, and (4) enhance the company's image. It's good public relations.

Co-op/Cooperative Centers

Co-op centers are often the most economical daycare option for non-working parents. This form of arrangement is impractical for the full-time employed parent.

In this type of center, the parents and teachers work as a team. Both sharing the responsibility of caring for the children as well as being concerned about the expenses of operating the center.

Public/Government-Run Centers

Public daycare centers are supported by local, state or federal funds. One of the most recognized forms of public daycare is Head Start. Head Start Daycare programs is a federally funded child development program operating for six (6) or more hours a day. It provides a comprehensive program consisting of parental involvement, nutritional, medical, dental, and psychological services. It is designed for the economically disadvantaged.

As of 1986, Head Start had produced over 8 million graduates.[29] Currently, however, Head Start only serves a small portion of those children who are eligible to receive the services. Unfortunately, these services are likely not to increase unless the federal government substantially rise the funding level of Head Start programs.

Other Forms of Childcare Services

School-age parenting infant development programs provide childcare services to infants and toddlers of school-age parents who are completing their schooling. Additionally, they provide seminars and workshops on Parenting Skills.

Latchkey Programs are designed to provide care for school-age children before school, after school and during vacations and holidays. As many as seven million children under age 13 are left unsupervised for some portion of the day.[30] This necessitates the need for latchkey programs. Such care offers parents the assurance that their children are under supervision until they arrive home from work.[31]

Child Protective Services or Respite/Emergency Care provides short-term childcare to families who are under stress, during emergency situations or when a child is moderately ill (and their "regular" caregiver will not accept the child until the illness has dissipated). Respite Care is generally provided to individuals through subcontracts with licensed group centers and/or family daycare homes.

Summer Daycare Camps are designed to provide educational/cultural enrichment activities to school-aged children during the summer months. These camps are held generally during the week for one (1) or more weeks.

It's an excellent opportunity for children and can relieve some of the pressures from parents who are concerned with childcare arrangements during the summer. These programs may consist of (but not limited to) the following activities: (1) arts and crafts, (2) music, (3) computer literacy, (4) nature exploration, (5) sports, and (6) field trips. These activities may run a full or half-day.

What Other Countries Are Doing About Child Care

In spite of the fact that the U.S. is considered the "land of the milk and honey", our present philosophy about childcare and family life is much to be desired. In other countries, "women are valued both as workers who are making a material contribution to the society and as child-raisers who play a central role in the continuity of family life in the culture".

Many European countries offer working and nonworking parents more choices in handling their child-raising responsibilities than are currently available in the United States.[32] As an industrialized country, we are lagging way behind. Perhaps, we could learn from and even adopt some of the childcare policies/practices found in foreign nations.

Spain and Hungary allows a mother to stay home for three years before she must return to work.[33] Additionally, Spain will permit a parent to work half time until a child is six. In Italy, France, Spain and Sweden maternity and/or paternity leave is granted. Belgium and the Netherlands are currently considering such a policy.[34]

The Swedish are very flexible - either parent is afforded the opportunity to take a six month leave after a child is born, and an additional six months may be taken at anytime up until the child is eight years old. Since 1980, Sweden has offered parental sick leave. The parent(s) are entitled to 60 days per year for each child, until the child is twelve. Sweden also offers a reduced work week for both parents.

In countries such as Italy, France and the U.S.S.R., mothers are given paid time off to nurse or feed their infant. Some larger businesses with many women employees have a nursing room at the place of business, so sitters or relatives caring for a new baby can bring the child to the place of work.[35]

The U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia found it to be cost effective to allow the mother to stay home and care for the child. Since government daycare (particular for infants) programs are quite expensive, those mothers who opted to stay home saved the state money. Some countries passed along part of the savings and give mothers an incentive to stay home by offering a paid maternity leave.[36]

In European countries, whether a parent opted to stay home or to place their child into a childcare facility, childcare benefits are made available to all, regardless of their income. By making the childcare option available to all, the issue of privileges being given to certain groups or classes could be eliminated.[37]

Daycare In Foreign Lands

France

The earliest form of daycare began in France in 1799. In 1844, the first infant day nursery called creche was established in Paris. Infants of working parents who are six weeks to three years old are placed in creche. Children between the ages of three to six years old go to "ecoles maternelle". Both forms of daycare are full-day programs.

Creches are subsidized by the government. Parents pay on a sliding scale rate. Due to limited spaces, priority is given to single parents or problem families.

Each creche serves forty to sixty children. They are staffed by nurses. They are located in buildings with a courtyard or garden, and the creche director has an apartment in the building.[38] Creches stress health, safety, cleanliness, physical care and motor development.

Ecoles maternelles are staffed by teachers. There is no charge for this type of toddler daycare. The program's main thrust is social and cognitive development.

Sweden

After the maternity or paternity leaves are over, daycare centers (dayhems) provide care for children from six months to seven years, offering full - or part-time care, whichever the parents want.[39] Dayhems are staffed with teachers and nurses. They are well organized, fully equipped and possess a high caliber of educational activities. Daycare homes are also prevalent in Sweden due to the increased number of women in the work force.

U.S.S.R.

Khrushev started state - run nurseries and kindergartens called "yasli-sads" in 1956. Approximately, 13 million children are served in yasli-sads; in Moscow, there are 3000 yasli-sads.

These programs come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. They are seen as the most highly developed and uniformed programs in the world. Collectivism/group participation is emphasized at an early age. The curriculum is designed to enhance the following characteristics in children: (1) industriousness, (2) group awareness, (3) aesthetics, (4) character, (5) cooperation, (6) problem-solving, and (7) creativity. Everything is planned and specified, even the temperature and spontaneous play only occurs at prescribed times and places, directed by nurse - upbringers who have three years' training at a teacher college.[41]

China

Nurseries in China are generally located in factories. This affords mothers the opportunity to nurse their infants while at work. These nurseries are ran by "aunties". Aunties are chosen persons, who may or may not have a high school diploma, but are responsible, caring and patient people.

There is one auntie assigned to every six to seven children. All of the children in each group are of the same age category. Younger infants are placed in pairs - in playpens or carriages. As they become older, the children are involved in daily structured activities. These activities tend to be social and artistic.

The child begins kindergarten after the age of three. All activities are geared toward the goals of work and serving others.[42]

Israel

Israel has an unique type of childcare arrangement called "Kibbutz". Children live in social units of four to five children under the supervision of a "metapelet". Each unit has its' own bedroom, bathroom, dining room, playroom, and yard. Within their social units, kibbutz children are taught to be independent, cooperative and social.

During the first year of a child's development, the mother spends time with the child in the Infant Home along with the "metapelet". Beyond the first year, a child usually sees his parents and/or siblings during children's hour, two hours in the late afternoon when the family meets in the parents' quarters. Parents may visit at any time during brief intervals, but they are not allowed to interfere with the child's activity or the work of the metapelet.

Metaplot are selected as teenagers. The selection process is based on the adolescent's demonstrated ability to provide childcare services. They are trained and mandated to follow specific instruction in a manual.

A metapelet is responsible for dressing, supervising, and training their unit of children. When the children reach the age of four to seven years old, the metapelet's responsibilities expands to the role of an assistant to the teacher. The metapelet aids the teacher in providing large group instruction in science, art, and nature.

What Is Consumer - Oriented/Quality Childcare?

Defining "quality" in childcare is a complicated task because there are so many different perspectives on the meaning of quality.[44] For example from a caregiver's perspective, "quality" may mean that their physical spaces is clean and their occupant size is full to its capacity. The policymakers at the local state, or federal level is concerned with the quantity and mix of childcare services available to families within his or her purview, as well as with setting a lower bound on quality of care, below which facilities may not operate.[45]

Child development experts have varied opinions. They find it difficult to arrive at a consensus of opinion as to "what childcare should or should not be". Some have the viewpoint, that any form of childcare outside of the home will have an harmful affect on the child. Others feel that "quality" childcare are settings which promote intelluctual stimulation. Still others, believe that "quality" childcare should be comprehensive in its scope. It should focus on the total development of the child as well as strengthening the family unit.

According to the "National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the following factors are indicators of a high "quality" environment for children:

(1) Children are safe and well nourished.
(2) Children have adequate space.
(3) Ample materials and equipment for learning are provided.
(4) Staff are trained in child development and teaching methods.
(5) There is good planning and organization.[46]

The kind of childcare experience which a child receives has a profound and lasting effect. Be it positive or negative. Therefore, it is imperative that parents seek and find "quality" services. It has been proven by researchers that high quality care produces the following effects: (1) less special education needed later, (2) increased lifetime earnings, (3) higher achievement test scores, (4) less teenage delinquency, (5) less adult unemployment, (6) less need for welfare assistance, and (8) reduced crime resulting in imprisonment.

From a parental perspective, what might be "quality" to one parent may be "mediocre" to another. Furthermore, as a child reaches different developmental stages in life (or as a parent attains different stations in life), what once was considered "quality" no longer matches the needs or temperament of that particular individual. The bottom-line however, is that parents want childcare which is convenient, affordable and appropriate to the perceived needs of the child. This is what is called " consumer-oriented" childcare.

Most parents want the best for their children. Parent criteria for quality programs often include staff they can communicate well with, an interesting and safe environment, a program of age appropriate activities for their child and adequate number of experienced staff.[48] Ideally, it should be in an environment which the child is comfortable with and enjoys.

Some parents however, continues to use poor-quality programs. They feel that they have no other alternative. Either they can not afford the higher cost of good programs, there are not enough quality programs to go around or they are unaware of how to select a good programs.[49]

Recognizing and finding a childcare setting of high quality is an inevitable challenge for parents. Selecting the setting, even after extensive and informed assessment and deliberation is just the tip of the iceberg. The parents task is not yet done, and further steps are necessary to see that what looks like a care arrangement of high quality really turns out to be so.[50]

Community College Involvement: How They Can Improve The Quality" of Childcare.

This author postulates that Community Colleges could have a tremendous impact on the improvement of childcare delivery systems. In the childcare arena, community colleges could serve as (1) advocates/change agents, (2) liaisons, (3) technical experts, and (4) providers of direct services.

As an advocate/change agent, they can advocate change in state, local, and federal legal systems, promote change in the overall improvement of childcare systems, and encourage others to take an active role.

Additionally, they can build alliances/partnerships with business, industry, volunteer groups, economic development groups, private funders, etc. to improve the "quality of life" for their consumers. Through these partnerships, they can develop a stronger political and financial base.

As a liaison, they can help parents as well as the community-at-large connect with needed resources. They can develop a childcare resource and referral service. This service will help parents identify the range of childcare options as well as counsel them on how to select a "quality" care program. For the

provider, they can inform them of a variety of quality control techniques, assisting them in licensing and provide assistance in the recruitment and screening of qualified staff. For the community, they may serve as a clearinghouse. One which disseminates information and resources. Information pertinent to the needs and demands of a particular community. Resources such as tax benefits, public and private vouchers, scholarships and grants.

As technical experts, they can provide training to family daycare providers, training to corporations and community organizations on "How to Start and Maintain a High-Quality Day Care Center" or "Family Day Care Home", and train individuals to provide homemaker services.

They can offer parenting skills workshops and child development conferences. Community Colleges can serve as quality control experts by monitoring the various childcare programs. They can conduct and support research pertinent to child care/child development. And last but not least, they can develop certification programs for pre-kindergarten/kindergarten teachers.

As providers of direct services, community colleges can establish on-site or nearby site daycare center and family daycare homes, latch-key programs, school-age parenting infant development programs, parent-toddler education programs, co-op nurseries, summer daycare camps, etc. As you can see, community colleges can play a privotal role in solving the childcare dilemma. The form of participation could be endless. Community Colleges need only to examine what is most feasible for their institution, while taking into consideration the supply and demands of that community.

Conclusion

The availability of quality, affordable daycare is critical to the well-being of children and families and is necessary for the proper functioning of all community interests including employers education and government. In higher education, childcare should be regarded as a primary resource. This makes the idea of attending college more plausible for all students (particularly those who have school-aged children). It can also be seen as a tangible benefit for faculty and staff.

If Community Colleges are going to be involved in improving the quality of childcare systems and if they intend on being consumer-oriented, they need to begin a three (3) phase plan. The three phases are: (1) preliminary planning, (2) data collection, and (3) decision-making.

In Phase I (preliminary planning), it is imperative that a Childcare Task Force Committee is established. This committee should be small, yet consist of a variety types of people who may be affected by the proposed services. This diverse group of few, can voice their opinions for many, while sharing in the ownership of this process. The task force should be made up of

representatives from: (1) the president's office, (2) institutional planning department, (3) personnel/human resource department, (4) public relations, (5) labor/union, (6) faculty (particularly from the childcare, education or social science department), (7) director of a program/department that is most likely to be affected by child-care related issues, (8) student government, (9) local CBO's, (10) an influential state and/or local public official, and (11) an attorney.

The major purpose of a task-force is to gather and analyze information so that management can decide whether the company (college) will start a childcare service, and if so to plan the type of program to established.[52] Secondly, the task force must establish clear goals and objectives. Careful delineation of goals sets the stage for appropriate data collection and program design.[53]

Some colleges may wish to provide direct childcare services for their students and staff in addition to extending these services to the community. Others may want to solicit funds, so that they can provide childcare reimbursements for their consumers. Still others, may wish to only provide information and referral. At any rate, it is the task forces job to collect pertinent data about the demand and supply of childcare services in their area. They must first conduct a need assessment and/or personal interviews with students, staff and local childcare providers. In doing so, the task force gains information on whether there is a "real" need (demand) for services. Secondly, the committee needs to find out what is currently available (supply) in the community. This type of information helps the college in knowing where there are gaps. It also assist them in avoiding duplication of services. After weighing this information, management can decide whether the task force should proceed with further investigation of a specific service or services that appear to be most appropriate.[54]

In the final phase (analysis and decision-making), the task force will recommend and/or select a program or variations of a program that matches the needs of the community college. The task force will also identify resources, project costs/benefits, discuss possible administrative structures, and legal ramifications. Last but not least, the task force may want to lay the groundwork for a future evaluation.[55]

In summary, institutions who plan to offer childcare services should consider the following ten recommendations which were established in 1987 by the Washington State Board for Community College Education:

(1) First priority for campus childcare should be provided to student parents, especially low-income students.

(2) Children under six years of age should receive priority for program planning and services with emphasis on service to children under 2 1/2 years.

(3) Institutions should link the provision of childcare to their educational or student services programs.

(4) Institutions should maintain accessibility through affordable rates and utilize a combination of user fees, student activity fees, and institutional and local funds to operate accessible, quality childcare programs.

(5) In those instances where faculty and staff use childcare, a fee schedule should be utilized which will recoup costs of the childcare services provided.

(6) Institutions should continue to operate childcare programs responsive to their individual missions and environments. Such programs should complement rather than compete with the private sector.

(7) To promote quality care, programs can use Higher Education Personnel Board and licensing standards as guidelines to set qualification, wages and benefits of program staff. Campus childcare centers should act as models for community childcare centers by continuing to pursue accreditation through the National Academy of Early Childhood programs (NAEYC).

(8) Childcare programs should continue to incorporate educational activities to improve parenting skills.

(9) When a voucher reimbursement is used to support the use of private childcare services, the rate of reimbursement should be high enough to allow parental choice.

(10) Childcare costs for student parents should be included in student financial aid budgets and award packages.[56]

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